

Let's break the silence

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This brochure could help
save a life...

All across Canada in every kind of home in every kind of neighbourhood, men are threatening, punching, slapping, kicking, hitting, beating, burning, knifing and shooting the women they live with. You may know a battered woman or her partner. You may BE one or the other. You may already know a little about the problem or be reading about it for the first time. Whichever category you fall into, this brochure will make it easier for you to help either yourself or someone else.

WHAT IS WIFE ASSAULT?

The term wife assault is applied to physical or psychological violence by a man towards his mate. You don't have to be married to be a batterer or his victim. You may be living common-law. You may be boyfriend and girlfriend. Wife assault, like any form of assault, is a crime, which the law can and does punish.

HOW COMMON IS IT?

At least one out of every ten women in Canada is battered by her partner. That means that more than 200,000 women in Ontario alone are being

physically assaulted not by strangers in the street, but by their husbands. They are women of all ages, income levels and cultures. Pregnant women are particularly at risk.

WHAT KIND OF MAN WOULD BATTER?

Rich men, poor men, men from literally every profession and background batter. For the most part they are normal men. They are not sick or mentally ill.

WHY SHOULD SOCIETY CARE?

In a healthy society no-one should have to live in terror. Yet countless Canadian women wake up with fear each morning and go to bed with fear at night. Violence increases over time. What starts with a slap or a shove can end, too often, in death. In fact, wife assault is responsible for one-fifth of all homicides in Canada—and the damage doesn't end there. Children exposed to family violence often face major adjustment problems during childhood and adolescence—and are themselves far more prone than normal to become either batterers or victims. We don't want that cycle to continue.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

The law says that assault is a criminal offence. If a man hits his partner or threatens to cause her physical harm, he is committing an illegal act for which he can be arrested, charged and sent to jail if convicted. Should he receive a suspended sentence and not have to spend time in jail, he will still have a criminal record.

A woman who leaves her partner specifically because he beats her is NOT considered to have deserted either him or the family home. She CAN still get custody of the children and financial support. If possible she should take the children with her when she leaves. Should she later decide to separate from her partner, she will be in a stronger position to apply for custody if the children are already physically with her. Legal advice is essential in these situations.

In some cases an assaulted woman may apply for a court order which will allow her to stay in the home and prevent her husband from entering it.

Any immigrant woman who is being beaten by her husband and who is afraid to leave for fear of losing his sponsorship should contact the nearest Canada Immigration Centre for advice. (Canada Immigration Centres are listed in the blue pages of the phone book in the Government of Canada section, under Employment and Immigration Canada, Immigrant Centres.) She should also

contact a local community legal clinic or an immigration lawyer.

WHAT CAN A BATTERED WOMAN DO?

Recognize she is NOT to blame...

An assaulted woman must first understand that she is NOT responsible for her partner's violence. No matter what he says, she does not deserve to be beaten. Nobody does.

Try to keep track...

Talk to someone such as a doctor, social worker or psychologist after each battering incident so that a record is kept. This record will prove extremely useful if the case goes to court.

Try to communicate with others...

A man who batters tends to isolate his victim, preventing her from confiding in anyone who might help her. Keeping the problem a secret makes it easier for the batterer to continue battering. A woman in a violent relationship should let others know what's going on. If possible, she should talk to an understanding friend or relative. There may be a women's centre in her community, where she can find support and advice. She should also seek help from those in the helping professions such as doctors, lawyers, social workers and clergy. Family violence is a complex issue and not everyone understands it.

If such a person makes her feel she is to blame, she should go to someone else. She should KEEP TRYING until she finds the help she needs. Above all, she should not give up.

WHERE CAN SHE TURN?

Her doctor

An assaulted woman should tell her doctor the truth about her situation. If she has sustained recent injuries she should ask that a detailed record of them be kept. This will prove useful if her case goes to court.

Her lawyer

It is a good idea to get legal advice. If a battered woman has decided to separate from, or divorce her partner, she needs to know what her rights are. To find out she should consult a lawyer. If she cannot afford a lawyer she has the right to free legal aid in Ontario.

The police

If a woman has been beaten she should call the police. The Solicitor-General has directed the police to lay charges whenever the facts and circumstances lead them to believe that an assault has taken place. Recent experience has shown that when the police, rather than the victim, press charges, the case is more likely to succeed in court. By having the police lay charges, the burden of responsibility is removed from the woman's

shoulders. It becomes more difficult for her partner to pressure her to drop the charges, since she can honestly tell him that it's out of her hands.

The courts

Because wife assault is a crime against society, the case against the batterer will be conducted by a Crown Attorney, who represents the province, with the victim acting as witness.

In every district in the province there are Crown Attorneys who have been specifically trained to deal with the special problems faced by victims of wife assault. They are there to guide battered women through the court system.

If the police do not charge her partner, the assaulted woman may do so herself. She can go to a Justice of the Peace and request that a charge be laid against her partner. The services of a Crown Attorney will still be available to her.

WHERE CAN AN ASSAULTED WOMAN GO?

Some go to friends or relatives. Many others go to shelters. A shelter offers exactly what its name implies: safety from assault, a chance to recover, rest and think, and the support of other sympathetic women. A woman does not need money to go to a shelter.

The staff there will provide for her immediate needs and those of her children. Some shelters have an arrangement with a nearby school which permits children to continue their education. Even if an assaulted woman is not planning to leave her home, she can still call a shelter for advice, encouragement and moral support. The following page contains a list of shelters in Ontario and their phone numbers.

WHAT CAN A BATTERER DO?

He can start by taking responsibility for his actions. His partner did not **MAKE** him hit her. Neither should he blame alcohol or drugs. These are sometimes used as an excuse. But there is no excuse for battering. Expressing anger or frustration through violence is something a batterer may have learned to do as a child, usually through witnessing or experiencing violence at home. With help, he **CAN** learn other ways of expressing these emotions, ways which will not damage the people he loves best. The batterer is responsible for finding help. Sources of help will vary from community to community. He may start with the family doctor or social service agencies.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You've read this brochure to the end and that's a good start. Show it to a friend. Talk to others. The more you know about this problem the more help you can offer someone in need. If you hear your neighbour being battered, call the police. Choose the right moment and talk to her. Let her know she is not alone. Suggest other sources of help. Give her this brochure or find her the phone number of a shelter. Remember, wife assault is a hidden crime. And it will continue, from one generation to the next, unless we **BREAK THE SILENCE**. So let's talk. Let's learn more about the problem. Let's do our best to solve it.

IT'S TIME TO BREAK THE SILENCE.

If you are a woman in crisis call your nearest shelter.

For more information on victims, batterers, research, services or advice for professionals write:

Break the Silence
Queen's Park
Toronto M7A 1N3
Attention: Wife Assault

WOMEN IN CRISIS, CALL:

NAME	TELEPHONE
Atikokan Atikokan Crisis Home	(807) 597-2868
Aurora Yellow Brick House	(416) 773-6481
Barrie Women and Children Crisis Centre	(705) 728-6300
Brantford Nova Vita Women's Shelter	(519) 752-4357
Cambridge Family Crisis Shelter	(519) 653-2422
Carleton Place Lanark County Interval House	(613) 257-5960
Chatham Chatham Women's Centre	(519) 354-6360
Cornwall Maison Baldwin House	(613) 938-2958
Eganville Avoca House	(613) 628-2154
Elliot Lake Women's Crisis Centre	(705) 461-9868
Geraldton Family Resource Centre	(807) 854-1529
Guelph Women in Crisis	(519) 836-5710
Hamilton Hope Haven	(416) 547-1815
InAsMuch House	(416) 529-8149
Hawkesbury Maison Interlude	(613) 632-1131 + 1 (800) 267-4101
Kapuskasing Habitat Interlude	(705) 337-1122
Kingston Kingston Interval House	(613) 546-1833
Kitchener Anselma House	(519) 742-5894
London Women's Community House	(519) 439-4543
Matheson CMHA Family Resource Centre	(705) 267-6010
Milton Halton Women's Place	(416) 878-8555
Mindemoya Mindemoya Family Resource Centre	(705) 377-5160
Niagara Falls NOVA-Women in Crisis	(416) 356-5800
North Bay Nipissing Transition House	(705) 476-2429
Oshawa Auberge	(416) 728-7311
Higgins House (Y.W.C.A. Apartment)	(416) 576-8880

NAME	TELEPHONE
Ottawa	
Maison d'Amitié (Amity House)	(613) 234-7204
Ottawa Interval House	(613) 234-5181
Owen Sound	
Grey-Bruce Women's Centre Inc.	(519) 371-1600
Peterborough	
Crossroads I	(705) 743-4135
Crossroads II	(705) 743-8922
Pembroke	
Bernadette McCann House for Women	(613) 732-3131
St. Catharines	
Women's Place	(416) 684-8331
St. Thomas	
Women's Place	(519) 633-0155
Sarnia	
Women's Interval Home	(519) 336-5200
Sault Ste. Marie	
Women in Crisis Home	(705) 759-1230
Sioux Lookout	
Sioux Lookout Family Resource Centre	(807) 737-2700
Stratford	
Optimism Place	(519) 271-5550
Sturgeon Falls	
Sturgeon Falls Resource Centre	(705) 753-1154
Sudbury	
YWCA Genevra House	(705) 674-2210
Thunder Bay	
Beendigen House	(807) 622-5101
Faye Peterson Transition House	(807) 623-6600
Thunder Bay Physical & Sexual Assault Crisis Centre	(807) 344-4502
TORONTO AREA	
Mississauga	
Interim Place	(416) 271-1861
North York	
North York Women's Shelter	(416) 635-9630
Scarborough	
Emily Stowe Shelter	(416) 264-4357
Rexdale	
Ernestine's Women's Shelter	(416) 746-3701
Toronto	
Interval House	(416) 924-1491
Women in Transition	(416) 967-5227
Women's Habitat	(416) 252-5829
Welland	
Women's Place	(416) 788-0113
Windsor	
Hiatus House	(519) 252-7781
Woodstock	
Women's Emergency Centre Inc.	(519) 539-1439



Dennis R. Timbrell
Minister Responsible
for Women's Issues

Ontario